

# REGIONAL COURTS – BASIC INFO

Draft #1 - October 28, 2003

## **EASY READER BROCHURE BASIC INFORMATION – REGIONAL COURTS**

### **How can I prepare for a court appearance?**

#### **A guide for self-represented litigants**

You are scheduled to appear in court. You will be appearing in court without an attorney. You are not alone—every year more people are doing the same thing. The courts may seem complicated and confusing, but there are lots of resources to help you. This pamphlet provides general information that will help you to prepare for any kind of court appearance. Preparation ahead of time will help the judge to understand your case and to make a fair ruling.

#### ***Which regional court will handle my case?***

Kern County covers over 8,000 square miles, and is divided into regional court jurisdictions to better serve local communities. Your case will be handled in the jurisdiction where the case originated or the offense occurred. In the case of a citation for a traffic violation, the court is named on the citation.

#### ***What should I wear to court?***

Court is a business type of environment. Dress as if you are going to a job interview. Be clean and neat. Shorts, tank tops and flip-flop sandals are not allowed.

#### ***When should I arrive at court?***

You need to arrive at the courthouse at least 30 minutes before your scheduled court appearance. It is very important that you allow plenty of time to find your assigned courtroom. If you are not in the courtroom when your case is called, the judge may dismiss your case, make a decision without hearing your side of the story or issue a warrant for your arrest.

#### ***What about court security?***

The courts need to be safe for everyone – litigants, witnesses, attorneys and court staff. To assure the protection of everyone, you and any other person entering the court must pass through a metal

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detector. Any metal object on your body must be removed and inspected, including belt buckles and steel-toed shoes.

### ***How do I find the correct courtroom?***

For most cases, court calendars are posted in the lobby of the courthouse. If you need help in locating your name, ask for help at the clerk's window.

### ***What materials should I bring?***

Bring copies of all documents that you have filed with the courts so far. You won't be able to get these documents from the court before your court appearance. It's really important that you know your case number.

Also bring documents that support what you want the judge to know about your case. You should bring original documents and one copy if possible. The judge may ask to keep the copy for more careful review. Put your evidence together in logical order so that it is easy for the judge to understand your side of the story.

### ***Do I need witnesses?***

Witnesses are people who can support what you want the judge to know about your case. It helps your case if your witnesses have seen or heard what you want the judge to know.

### ***How long will I have to wait?***

That depends on how many people are scheduled to appear at the same time as you. The judge may not call the cases in the same order that they are listed on the calendar. Some cases will take less time, and they may be handled first. Depending on your case, you may need to plan on being in court all day.

### ***Other helpful hints:***

- The proper way to address the judge is "your honor".
- Speak directly to the judge, not to the other party in the case.
- If you need special services for a disability, please notify the courts ahead of time so that arrangements can be made.
- Speak properly—don't use foul language.
- Turn cell phones and pagers to "off" or vibrate mode.

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- Food and/or drinks are not allowed in the courthouse.

Arvin/Lamont Branch  
12022 Main Street  
Lamont, CA 93241  
Phone (661) 868-5800  
FAX (661) 845-9142

Delano/McFarland Branch  
1122 Jefferson Street  
Delano, CA 93215  
Phone (661) 720-5800  
FAX (661) 721-1237

Kern River Branch  
7046 Lake Isabella Boulevard  
Lake Isabella, CA 93240  
Phone (760) 549-2000  
FAX (760) 549-2120

Mojave Branch  
1775 Highway 58  
Mojave, CA 93501  
Phone (661) 824-7100  
General FAX (661) 824-4408  
Civil FAX (661) 824-3238

Ridgecrest Branch  
132 East Coso Street  
Ridgecrest, CA 93555  
Phone (760) 384-5900  
General FAX (760) 384-5899  
Civil FAX (760) 384-5898

Shafter/Wasco Branch  
325 Central Valley Highway  
Shafter, CA 93263  
Phone (661) 746-7500  
FAX (661) 746-0545

Taft/Maricopa Branch

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311 Lincoln Street  
Taft, CA 93268  
Phone (661) 763-8531  
FAX (661) 763-2439

### IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

(661) 868-4815	Family Law Facilitator's Office
(661) 868-4530	Family Court Services (Mediation)
(661) 868-2532	Small Claims Advisor
(661) 868-4885	Guardianship / Probate
(661) 868-5320	Kern County Law Library
(661) 325-5943	Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance

*More information is also available on these websites:*

<a href="http://www.co.kern.ca.us/courts">www.co.kern.ca.us/courts</a>	Kern County Superior Court
<a href="http://www.kerncountylawlibrary.org">www.kerncountylawlibrary.org</a>	Kern County Law Library
<a href="http://www.sccba.com/kcba">www.sccba.com/kcba</a>	Kern County Bar Association
<a href="http://www.gbla.org">www.gbla.org</a>	Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance
<a href="http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov">www.courtinfo.ca.gov</a>	Administrative Office of the Courts Self-Help Site <i>Approved Judicial Council forms are available on this website.</i>